

**Statement by Senate Majority Leader Tom Daschle  
on a Resolution Authorizing the President to Use Force,  
if Necessary, to End the Threat to World Peace  
from Saddam Hussein's Weapons of Mass Destruction  
Thursday, October 10, 2002**

**Mr. President,** we are now engaged in one of the most consequential debates addressed in this chamber in many years. We are confronting the grave issues of war and peace. We are considering how the United States should respond to a murderous dictator who has shown that he will be bound neither by conscience, nor by the laws or principles of civilized nations. And we are contemplating whether, and under what conditions, the Congress should authorize the pre-emptive use of American military power to remove the threat he poses.

These questions go directly to who we are as a nation. How we answer them will have profound consequences -- for our nation, for our allies, for the war on terrorism, and -- perhaps most importantly -- for the men and women in our armed forces who could be called to risk their lives because of our decisions.

There is no question that Saddam Hussein is a dangerous man who has done barbaric things. He has invaded neighbors, supported terrorists, repressed and murdered his own people. Over the last several months, as the world has sought to calm the violence between Israelis and Palestinians, Iraq has tried to inflame the situation by speaking against the very existence of Israel and encouraging suicide bombers in Gaza and the West Bank.

Saddam Hussein has stockpiled, weaponized, and used chemical and biological weapons. And he has made no secret of his desire to acquire nuclear weapons. He has ignored international agreements and frustrated the efforts of international inspectors, and his ambitions today are as unrelenting as they have ever been.

As a condition of the truce that ended the Gulf War, Saddam Hussein agreed to eliminate Iraq's nuclear, biological and chemical weapons, and to abandon all efforts to develop or deliver such weapons. That agreement is spelled out in UN Security Council Resolution 687. Iraq has never complied with the resolution.

For the first seven years after the Gulf War, it tried to deceive UN weapons inspectors, block their access to key sites and make it impossible for them to do their jobs. Finally, in October 1998, the UN was left with no choice but to withdraw its inspectors from Iraq. As a result, we do not know exactly what is now in Iraq's arsenal.

We do know, however, that Iraq has weaponized thousands of gallons of anthrax and other deadly biological agents. We know that Iraq maintains stockpiles of some of world's deadliest chemical weapons, including VX, sarin and mustard gas. We know that Iraq is developing deadlier ways to deliver these horrible weapons, including unmanned drones and long-range ballistic missiles. And we know that Saddam Hussein is committed to one day possessing nuclear weapons. If that should happen, instead of simply bullying the Gulf region, he could dominate it. Instead of threatening only his neighbors, he would become a grave threat to US security and to global security. The threat posed by Saddam Hussein may not be imminent. But it is real. It is growing. And it cannot be ignored.

Despite that, like many Americans, I was concerned by the way the Administration first proposed to deal with that threat. The President's desire to wage war alone -- without the support of our allies and without authorization from Congress -- was wrong.

Many of us -- Democrats and Republicans -- made it clear that such unilateralism was not in the nation's best interests. I now commend the Administration for changing its approach and acknowledging the importance of working with our allies. I also commend it for recognizing that under our Constitution, it is Congress that authorizes the use of force, and for requesting a resolution providing such authority. And I applaud my colleagues -- Democrats and Republicans, in the House and Senate -- for the improvements they have made to the Administration's original resolution.

Four changes were especially critical:

First: Instead of giving the President broad and unfocused authorization to take action "in the region," as the Administration originally sought, this resolution focuses specifically on the threat posed by Iraq. It no longer authorizes -- nor should it be used to try to justify -- the use of force against other nations, organizations or individuals that the President may believe threaten peace and stability in the Persian Gulf region. It is a strong and focused response to a specific threat. It is not a template or model for any other situation.

Second: This resolution expresses the deep conviction of this Congress, and of the American people, that President Bush should continue to work through the United Nations Security Council in order to secure Iraqi compliance with UN resolutions. Unfettered inspections may or may not lead to Iraqi disarmament. But whether they succeed or fail, the effort we expend in seeking inspections will make it easier for the President to assemble a global coalition against Saddam, should military action eventually be needed.

Third: This resolution makes it clear that, before the President can use force in Iraq, he must certify to the Congress that diplomacy has failed, and that further diplomatic efforts alone cannot protect America's national security interests, nor can they lead to enforcement of the UN Security Council resolutions.

Fourth: This resolution protects the balance of power by requiring the President to comply with the War Powers Act and to report to Congress at least every 60 days "on matters relevant to this resolution."

This resolution gives the President the authority he needs to confront the threat posed by Iraq. It is a fundamentally different and better resolution than the one the President sent us. It is neither a Democratic resolution nor a Republican resolution. It is now a statement of American resolve and values.

It is more respectful of our Constitution, more reflective of our understanding that we need to work with our allies in this effort, and more in keeping with our strong belief that force must be a last resort, not a first response.

Because this resolution is improved, because I believe that Saddam Hussein represents a real threat, and because I believe it is important for America to speak with one voice at this critical moment -- I will vote to give the President the authority he needs.

I respect those who reach different conclusions.

For me, the deciding factor is my belief that a united Congress will help the President unite the world. And by

uniting the world, we can increase the world's chances of succeeding in this effort, and reduce both the risks and the costs that America may have to bear.

With this resolution, we are giving the President extraordinary authority. How he exercises that authority will determine how successful any action in Iraq might be.

In 1991, by the time the President's father sought Congressional support to use force against Iraq, he had secured pledges of military cooperation from nearly 40 nations, and statements of support from scores of others. He had already secured the backing of the United Nations. And he had already developed a clear plan of action.

In assembling that coalition, the legitimacy of our cause was affirmed. Regional stability was maintained. The risk to our soldiers was lessened. America's burden was reduced. And, perhaps most important, Iraq was isolated. At this point, we have done none of those things. That is why, unlike in 1991, our vote on this resolution should be seen as the beginning of a process, not the end.

For our efforts in Iraq to succeed, the President must continue to consult with Congress and to work hard to build a global coalition. That is not capitulation. It is leadership, and it is essential.

In my view, there are five other crucial steps the Administration must take before any final decision on the use of force in Iraq is made.

First and foremost, the President needs to be honest with the American people -- not only about the benefits of action against Iraq, but also about the risks and the costs of such action. We are no longer talking about driving Saddam Hussein back to within his borders. We are talking about driving him from power. That is a much more difficult and complicated goal.

A story in this past Sunday's Philadelphia Inquirer suggests that top officials in the Administration "have exaggerated the degree of allied support for a war in Iraq." The story goes on to say that others in the Administration "are rankled by what they charge is a tendency" by some in the Administration "to gloss over the unpleasant realities" of a potential war with Iraq.

A report in yesterday's Washington Post suggests that "an increasing number of intelligence officials, including former and current intelligence agency employees -- are concerned the agency is tailoring its public stance to fit the Administration's views."

I do not know whether these reports are accurate. We do know from our own national experience, however, that public support for military action can evaporate quickly if the American people come to believe they have not been given all of the facts. If that should happen, no resolution Congress might pass will be able to unify our nation. The American people expect, and success demands, that they be told both the benefits and the risks involved in any action against Iraq.

Second: We need to make it clear to the world that the reason we would use force in Iraq is to remove Saddam Hussein's weapons of mass destruction. I would prefer that this goal had been made explicit in this resolution. However, it is clear from this debate that Saddam's weapons of mass destruction are the principal threat to the United States -- and the only threat that would justify the use of United States military force against Iraq. It is the threat that the President cited repeatedly in his speech to the American people Monday

night. It may also be the only threat that can rally the world to support our efforts. Therefore, we expect, and success demands, that the Administration not lose sight of this essential mission.

Third: we need to prepare for what might happen in Iraq after Saddam Hussein. "Regime change" is an easy expression for a difficult job. One thing we have learned from our action in Afghanistan is that it is easier to topple illegitimate regimes than it is to build legitimate democracies. We will need to do much better in post-Saddam Iraq than the Administration has done so far in post-Taliban Afghanistan.

Iraq is riven by religious and ethnic differences and demoralized by a repressive government and crushing poverty. It has no experience with democracy. History tells us that it is not enough merely to hope that well-intentioned leaders will rise to fill the void that the departure of Saddam Hussein would leave. We must help create the conditions under which such a leader can arise and govern.

Unless we want to risk seeing Iraq go from bad to worse, we must help the Iraqi people rebuild their political and economic institutions after Saddam. That could take many years, and many billions of dollars -- which is another reason we must build a global coalition. The American people expect, and success demands, that we plan for stability, and for economic and political progress in Iraq after Saddam.

Fourth: we need to minimize the chances that any action we may take in Iraq will destabilize the region. Throughout the Persian Gulf, there are extremists who would like nothing more than to transform a confrontation with Iraq into a wider war between the Arab world and Israel, or the Arab world and the West.

What happens if -- by acting in Iraq -- we undermine the government in Jordan, a critical ally and a strategic buffer between Iraq and Israel? What happens if we destabilize Pakistan and empower Islamic fundamentalists? Unlike Iraq, Pakistan already has nuclear weapons -- and the means to deliver them. What happens if that arsenal falls into the hands of Al Qaeda or other extremists?

We can tell the Arab world that this is not a fight between their nations and ours. But a far better way to maintain stability in the Gulf is to demonstrate that -- by building a global coalition to confront Saddam. That is why the Administration must make every reasonable effort to secure a UN resolution, just as we did in 1991. With UN support, we can count a number of Arab countries as full allies. Without UN support, we can't even count on their air space. We expect, and success demands, that any action we take in Iraq make the region more stable, not less.

Fifth and finally: we cannot allow a war in Iraq to jeopardize the war on terrorism. We are fighting terrorist organizations with global networks, we need partners around the globe. Some -- including the chairman of the President's own Foreign Intelligence Advisory Board -- doubt whether we can count on this continued cooperation in the war on terror if we go to war against Iraq.

I do not know if that is true. I do know, however, that the military, intelligence and political cooperation we receive from nations throughout the world is critical to the war on terrorism. Saddam Hussein may yet target America. Al Qaeda already has.

The American people expect, and our national security demands, that the Administration make plans to ensure that any action we take in Iraq does not distract or detract from the war on terror. If they fail to do so, any victory we win in Iraq would come at a terrible cost.

Monday night, in his speech to the nation, the President said: "The situation could hardly get worse for world security and the people of Iraq." Yes, it can.

If the Administration attempts to use the authority in this resolution without doing the work that is required before and after military action in Iraq, the situation there -- and elsewhere -- can indeed get worse. We could see more turmoil in the Persian Gulf, not less. We could see more bloodshed in the Middle East, not less. Americans could find themselves more vulnerable to terrorist attacks, not less.

So I stress again, Mr. President: This resolution represents a beginning, not an end. If we are going to make America and the world safer, much more work needs to be done before the force authorized in this document is used.

Some people think it is wrong to ask questions or raise concerns when the President says our national security is at risk. They believe it is an act of disloyalty. I disagree. In America, asking questions is an act of patriotism. For those of us who have been entrusted by our fellow citizens to serve in this Senate, asking questions is more than a privilege. It is a Constitutional responsibility.

The American people have serious questions about the course of action this resolution could set us on. Given the gravity of the issues involved, and the far-reaching consequences of this course, it is essential that their questions are answered. I support this resolution. And for the sake of the American people -- especially those who may be called to defend our nation -- we must continue to ask questions.

On one point, however, I have no questions. I believe deeply and absolutely in the courage, the skills, and the devotion of our men and women in uniform. I know that if it becomes necessary for them to stand in harm's way to protect America, they will do so with pride and without hesitation, and they will succeed. They are the finest fighting force the world has ever known.

For their sake -- for the sake of all Americans, and for the world's sake -- we must confront Saddam Hussein. But we must do so in a way that avoids making a dangerous situation even worse.

# # #